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R&B SINGER H.E.R.

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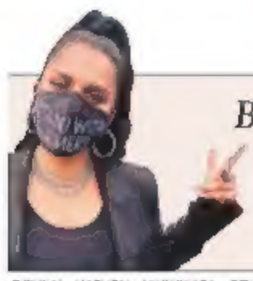


BEYONCE BREAKS RECORDS AS WOMEN RULE GRAMMYS 2021

Women artistes emerged big winners in the usually male dominated top categories at the 63rd Grammy Awards

MOST AWARDED FEMALE ARTISTE IN HISTORY

With 28 Grammy wins in all, Beyonce broke the record of veteran singer Alison Krauss. She trails only classical conductor Sir George Solti, who still holds 31 Grammys. She was nominated in nine categories and won in four, including best rap song with Megan Thee Stallion for *Savage* remix, Best R&B performance for *Black Parade* and best music video for *Brown Skin Girl*

'I CAN'T BREATHE' IS SONG OF THE YEAR

- R&B singer H.E.R. won song of the year for *I Can't Breathe*, which quotes the last words of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man who died while being arrested by police in Minneapolis last year
- Canadian YouTuber Lilly Singh turned up on the red carpet wearing a mask displaying "I stand with Farmers" (pic far left)

BTS
THE POPULAR KOREAN BOY BAND LOST TO LADY GAGA AND ARIANA GRANDE | P11

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Chandrababu faces FIR heat in land scam

Completely new angle in the Amaravati land row as it pertains to deals after capital project was in place

G S VASU

NARA Chandrababu Naidu is in the dock. The three-time chief minister has been linked to what has now come to be known as the 'Amaravati land scam', which involved aggregation of thousands of acres for the proposed capital of the divided state of Andhra Pradesh.

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Andhra Pradesh is learnt to have registered an FIR against Naidu for various procedural irregularities with regard to decisions taken in relation to the capital city project. As chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Naidu held dual capacity as he was also the Chairman of the AP Capital Region Development Authority.

The case, which throws up a completely new angle in the Amaravati land scam, has been registered under Section 120 B (conspiracy) and Sections 166, 167 and 217 of the IPC, read with Prohibition of Assigned Lands Alienation Act of 1977 and the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. A former minister in Naidu's Cabinet, P Narayana, has also been named in the FIR and summons to appear before the CID have been issued to both. Naidu served two terms as chief minister of the undivided Andhra Pradesh and the third as CM of the divided AP after bifurcation from 2014 to 2019.

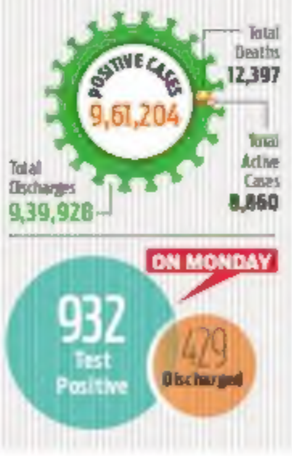
One of the major charges against Naidu pertains to alienation of "assigned lands", which form part of the aggregated 25,000-30,000 acres. According to the investigations done thus far by the AP government agencies, approximately 500 acres of assigned land had been purchased by different persons after the announcement of the capital city. The crux of the charge in this case is that the AP government later issued a GO granting one-time exemption allowing alienation of such lands purchased by non-assignees for the capital project. Thus, they would stand to gain from the model prepared by the Naidu government under which 1,450-1,500 sq yards of developed commercial and residential plots would be given for every acre surrendered. The "returnable plots" have also been allotted to those who purchased and surrendered the assigned lands, primarily given to SCs and STs.

Expanding scope tied to more probe

Whether the scope of the FIR against Naidu will be enlarged to invoke provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act will depend on further investigation

It is understood that even a formal sanction of the Cabinet has not been obtained before the GO in question was issued. File notings by bureaucrats that such a decision would be in contravention of law were reportedly ignored. "It is possible that those in power take certain decisions with bonafide intentions, even if they are proved wrong. But, in this case, the end beneficiary is known prior to grant of exemption. Hence, the conspiracy," a source explained. CONTINUED ON: P7

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE



As Covid fears loom, film fest postponed

The State Government on Monday issued a circular announcing that the 13th edition of Bengaluru International Film Festival will be postponed indefinitely, in light of the increase in Covid cases. The event was scheduled to be held from March 24-31. A core committee meeting was held, headed by Chief Secretary and Department of Information and Public Relations, where it was stated that with over 7,000 delegates joining in from other countries, it would be tough to follow Covid safety guidelines.

EXPRESS INTAKE

Amit Shah, Mamata locked in war of words | P9
Security forces gun down 55 in Myanmar in past 48 hours | P12

No lockdown, no change in status quo, says BSY

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister BS Yediyurappa on Monday laid all speculation over another lockdown or night curfews in Karnataka to rest, insisting that no decision has been taken. He said that the status quo will continue in Karnataka for another week and any decision will be arrived at only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video-conference with Chief Ministers on March 17.

With cases on the rise in Karnataka, the technical advisory committee on Covid-19 at a meeting on Monday informed the chief minister that the surge could be a precursor to the second wave of infections in the State and measures needed to be taken immediately to control its spread.

"The technical committee emphasised that Covid preventive measures and safety protocols need to be followed. Masks and social distancing are mandatory. Awareness among people has worn off and if this continues, we will be compelled to take action. We will have to restart slapping fines on people for not wearing masks. For now, there will be no lockdown or night curfew or restriction of any kind, but people have to cooperate with the government," Yediyurappa said, adding that his government will study the situation for another week and then take a decision on reviewing the interstate travel regulation.

He said that along with the vaccination drive, tracing and tracking mechanisms will also be revived and shopkeepers, bus drivers and conductors etc with symptoms will be tested on priority.

CONTINUED ON: P3

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, DyCM C N Ashwath Narayan and Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar at the Covid review meeting, in Bengaluru on Monday | EXPRESS

Electoral rolls will be used to trace elders

In a meeting chaired by CM BS Yediyurappa, the Technical Advisory Committee suggested enhancing vaccination on a war-footing. The TAC also asked for inoculation to be carried out more effectively in seven districts, including Bengaluru Urban and Rural. "The committee has suggested starting vaccination drives at apartments in seven districts. We will use the electoral rolls to identify senior citizens and administer vaccines to them," the CM said, adding, "Currently, on an average, only about 1.5 lakh people are getting the vaccine daily. We intend to increase that to 3 lakh per day." P3

Wholesale inflation soars in Feb, dims rate cut hopes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

A sharp increase in fuel and food prices pushed the wholesale price index-based inflation to a 27-month high of 4.17% in February, according commerce ministry data released on Monday. The WPI inflation was 2.03% in January and 2.26% in February last year.

The latest numbers, coming a week after another set of data showed February retail inflation shot up to 5.03%, may force the Reserve Bank of India to opt for a pause in policy rate in the next monetary policy review. Experts say the upward trend in inflation will continue for the next three months.

"Inflation dynamics will rule out any further rate cuts, with a status quo expected through 2021," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist, ICRA Ratings.

According to government data, food index in February 2021 rose to 3.31%, compared to a 0.26% contraction seen in the previous month. Petroleum product prices have reached historic highs as international crude prices have surged in recent months and due to high indirect taxes.

COUNTERPUNCH

RS flags British racism, govt says it will take it up when required

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

DAYS after a tell-all interview of Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle and the controversy over Indian-origin Rashmi Samant, who was forced to resign as president of the Oxford University Students Union, the issue of racism in the UK figured in the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Just last week, the UK Parliament had debated the ongoing agitation against the new farm laws in India and criticised the alleged violation of human rights of protesters. The Centre hit back sharply, calling it an "unwarranted and tendentious" debate.

The matter of racism was raised by BJP member Ashwini Vaishnav. "She (Samant) was cyberbullied to the point that she had to resign and even the Hindu religious beliefs of her parents were publicly attacked by a faculty member," Vaishnav said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India would take it up with Britain. As a friend, India also has concerns about UK's reputational impacts, he added.

"We have strong ties with the UK, we will take up such matter with great candour when required. We will monitor such development very, very closely, we will raise it when required.... As the land of Mahatma Gandhi, we can never turn our eyes away from racism wherever it is, particularly so in a country where we have such a large diaspora," he said.

EXPRESS READ

Panchamasalis end stir over quota demand

Bengaluru: Panchamasali-Lingayat seers, who had intensified their stir for inclusion of the community under 2A category, called off their agitation on Monday after CM B S Yediyurappa assured them of appropriate action. P4

Death penalty in Batla House encounter case

SANA SHAKIL @ New Delhi

ARIZ Khan, convicted in the killing of a police officer in the 2008 Batla House encounter in Delhi, was sentenced to death on Monday by a Delhi court, which said it is the most appropriate punishment for 'dreaded terrorists' like him.

"Nature of offence and manner of committing the crime caused extreme indignation to the society in this case," Additional Sessions Judge Sandeev Yadav said, declaring that there was no doubt that Ariz and his accomplices fired at police officials "without provocation".

The encounter between the Delhi Police and a bunch of Indian Mujahideen members holed up in a flat in South Delhi had led to the death of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, while two others sustained injuries. The court imposed a fine of ₹11 lakh on Ariz, of which ₹10 lakh was to be given to the family of Sharma, who was posthumously awarded the Ashok Chakra.

Judge Yadav also sought to put an end to the allegations of the September 2008 police operation being a fake encounter. He held that police officials had no intention to kill the IM men, stating that some members of the raiding team were not even carrying arms. "It is obvious that Ariz and his accomplices fired at police without being challenged," he said. Ariz's lawyer M S Khan had opposed capital punishment, saying the incident was not premeditated.

"Weapons like AK-47s and two pistols were retrieved from the flat. Considering the nature of devastation these weapons cause, it will be safe to conclude that they were kept in the flat to indulge in terrorist and anti-social activities," the court ruled.

The case will now go to the Delhi High Court for confirmation of the capital punishment.

Buzz is... Bees being used to tackle jumbo menace

PRAJNA GR @ Madikeri

IT may seem incredulous, but this research project in Kodagu district looks at the possibility of controlling mighty wild elephants with tiny bees. At a time when there has been an increase in human-elephant conflicts in the state, the project, RE-HAB -- Reducing Elephant Human Attack by using Bees, aims to tackle the menace ecologically.

Sponsored by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), the project was launched at the Ponnampet Forestry College in Kodagu on Monday.

Three major elephant conflict spots have been chosen in the district, including two at Nagarahole

Wildlife Reserve and one at Thora village in Virajpet, where ten beehive boxes have been placed on the fringes of the forest. Boxes have been kept at 8 feet distance and tied using a fence rope.

KVIC Chairman Vinay Kumar Saxena said, "States with high elephant populations are spending crores of rupees to tackle the human-elephant conflict." P7